

All Fall Down

Guardian1

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Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)
[Copyright Information](#)
[Table of Contents](#)
[Summary](#)
[1. All Fall Down](#)

Summary

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And after all is said and done, can Freya be happy with what she has?

1. All Fall Down

All Fall Down

*After a while you'll forget everything
It was a brief interlude, a midsummer night's fling —
And you'll see that it's time to move on...*

— meatloaf

Freya Crescent had fallen hopelessly, immutably in love, the summer she was seventeen.

He'd been in the same final training class as she had been, a trainee beside her, ready to squire and then take on the colours of a fully-fledged Dragon Knight. He was quiet — quieter than most, more than a little shy, close-mouthed. At that age, she'd been the exact opposite — a boisterous, proud, stubborn child, who dreamed of being an elite. It had been a surprise to everybody when

they had started
'walking out', as was the polite term.

Well, in fact, they'd never started conventionally
'walking out'.
They'd shared a mutual understanding, one they'd
never acted on,
but merely made known as they grew up together. In
fact, it all
really started on the mission they undertook to
become full Dragon
Knights, one year later; as she lay wounded on the
battlefield, his
hands shook as he tried to apply a potion. Freya
could have giggled;
the wound wasn't that bad. She couldn't even feel it.
That had to be a
good sign, right?

"Don't go to sleep," he'd snarled at her,
uncharacteristically
ferocious. "Don't go to sleep, Freya — if you love
me, don't close
your eyes."

The order had seemed a particularly hard one.
The female Burmecian
had felt dizzy and the corners of her vision were

greyish; foul
monsters in the Grotto, couldn't they have just
stayed out of her way?

“Do love you,” she muttered.

“And I love you, too,” he said, with infinite
gentleness. “But if you
smack me with your tail one more time, I'll tug it
off... there we
go.”

Revived by the potion, but more by his words,
Freya had known then that
she couldn't live without him.

He hadn't said any more 'I-love-you's' for a
while after that. Fratley
had bottled them up, made them special, made the
words have meaning.
If she ever got lonely for a physical reminder of his
affections, all
she had to do was look in his eyes — he could
communicate anything
with a glance. Freya had liked that.

Such happy years.

She should have gone with him.

Better yet, she should have never let him go.

“...I love you, Freya.”

Now she'd found him, she supposed she should have been happy.

Overjoyed, even. Everybody expected her to be, of course; everyone wanted her to be over the moon.

Especially when he told her he loved her, that first time back in Burmecia, after so many years. It had seemed so right — a new beginning. Yes, she'd told herself. *Now I can live again.*

“I love you, Freya. More than anything.”

He told her he loved her, so many times.

So many, many times.

“... love you, Freya —”

“Freya, I love you —”

“Freya...”

As if you're trying to convince me. As if you're trying to convince yourself.

Both were failing miserably.

Fratley had always done it differently. He'd never said it with his lips, but instead said it with those eyes.

My God, she could have drowned in those eyes...

“Freya?”

The voice still made her ache inside — deep and husky and bittersweet. If she could have given Fratley's voice a colour, it would have been violet, the liquid sweet violet of flowers in the meadow, deep and dark.

“I'm here, Fratley. By the window.”

The illusion was broken when he wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her tightly against him. That action was sacred, made for the middle of the night when they used to stand and look at the stars, getting themselves soaking wet; how could he cheapen that by doing it so casually?

The answer was simple — because he did not know, because he did not remember, and because he never would.

I feel like shaking you and shaking you until you open your eyes again and look at me with all the shine you used to, the shine that said ‘Freya’, the shine that made you alive — who is this be-damned stranger with my lover’s voice?

“How are you feeling? You look pale.” If she closed her eyes, she could imagine it was really him.

“I’m fine.” Did her voice sound too light? “Maybe I just need to go lie down.”

He released her and looked at her plainly. “If you’re sick, you’ll tell me immediately, won’t you?”

“I’ll tell you immediately, Fratley.”

“That’s good.” He gently nuzzled himself against her. “You go lie down. I love you, Freya.”

It was good that he slipped away so quickly, for she immediately felt like smashing his head into the brickwork.

“Goodbye, Fratley.”

Her tail beat a quiet tattoo on the dry stones of the floor beneath her.

There was only one thing to do, of course.

Freya stood in the rain, quelling the urge to giggle. She had the suitably curt note left on her pillow, she had her travelling clothes on, her spear tied to her back — all she needed now was a little stick with a spotted neckerchief tied to the end, a proper little runaway.

At this mental image she burst out laughing, and she only realized when the wetness on her face was warm that she was crying.

I don't want to live the rest of my life afraid to tell a man I don't love him. I just want to live.

And when I come back, who knows?

Maybe you'll have come to your senses.

Maybe I'll have come to mine.

*Maybe oglops will have wings and maybe
Amarant will have taken up
wearing ladies' clothing.*

At that thought she dried her tears away, her heart
cheering slightly.
She could go visit Amarant, and all her friends, and
maybe even trek
down to the upper continents to see how Vivi was
doing. Freedom was
sweet after self-induced capture.

Maybe Zidane could tell her what to do.

*Yes, you can both discuss techniques about
leaving honour behind to
turn tail and flee.*

That thought was so damning that she almost
dropped her spear
and ran back into the city. But what good would that
do? She'd just
draw the same conclusion again and perhaps only
two weeks later she'd

be in the same position, out on the city limits,
staring at the walls
like they were oracles of wisdom.

*You knew the value of walking the world at times
like this, my
love. If any of you remains inside the man inside this
city, I know
he will understand.*

With great effort, Freya Crescent turned around
and began walking away.
However, as the city walls got smaller, she quickly
spun around and
closed her eyes, focusing on the way Fratley had
always looked,
standing in the rain.

“I love you,” she murmured to her mind’s eye.

Then she ran.

~end~

Table of Contents

Title Page	1
Copyright Information	2
Table of Contents	3
Summary	4
1. All Fall Down	5